

L MANN *Exclusives*

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The Black Box



*Featuring:
Dunninger's
Billet Box Pad*

*by
Richard Osterlind*



FORWARD

In 1926, Dunninger shattered the known world of the stage mindreaders by introducing a method that did away with all previously known systems of stage mindreading. Clipboards, codes, billet and envelope switching devices, hidden telephones and most important of all, assistants became history.

Dunninger did it all with his mysterious looking box-tray tablet of his own invention and his method became a one-man presentation and the best ever conceived.

In this treatise professional Mentalist Richard Osterlind from Connecticut tells the reader an easy way of constructing this box tablet.

PLEASE NOTE: Dunninger used the box tablet also for covering his left hand while he took out a hand full of stolen billets from his left pants pocket while standing and delivering his opening lecture and then sat in his easy chair with the box tablet almost totally out of sight of the audience and then opened out the box.

The reader should practice his own preferred system well. Richar Osterlind does a standing act and has perfected his own handling.

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The Black Box

a modern method by Richard Osterlind

Dunninger was, without doubt, the greatest Mentalist of the twentieth century. His method has been documented in previous books by Al Mann and others. I began using the Dunninger routine in 1972 and have developed many additions and variations over the years to suit my own needs.

What you are about to read here is a method that works perfectly and will convince any audience that you can read minds. It's secret will throw off both Magicians and well-informed laymen. There is some work involved in making up the gimmick, but nothing worthwhile comes easily. The reader will be well-rewarded for the amount of effort put forth.

This manuscript is for the serious professional and it is assumed that the reader has considerable knowledge of his art.

Richard Osterlind

Effect:

The Mentalist passes out small pieces of paper (2" by 2") to the audience along with some pencils. They are requested to write personal information on their paper and to fold it up. The Mentalist then supplies the audience with letter size envelopes for them to seal their papers in. The Mentalists never collects the envelopes, but rather leaves them with the audience members.

Without the use of any screens, the Mentalist picks up his writing pad (to be described later) and begins to read minds. Half way through the presentation the Mentalists, by his actions, shows that the pad is ordinary and does not contain any billets. (The performer doesn 't say this, of course!) At the end of the mind-reading demonstration the pad can be used for a prediction and left in the hands of an audience member.

This method was developed from years of experience and is definately not a pipe dream.

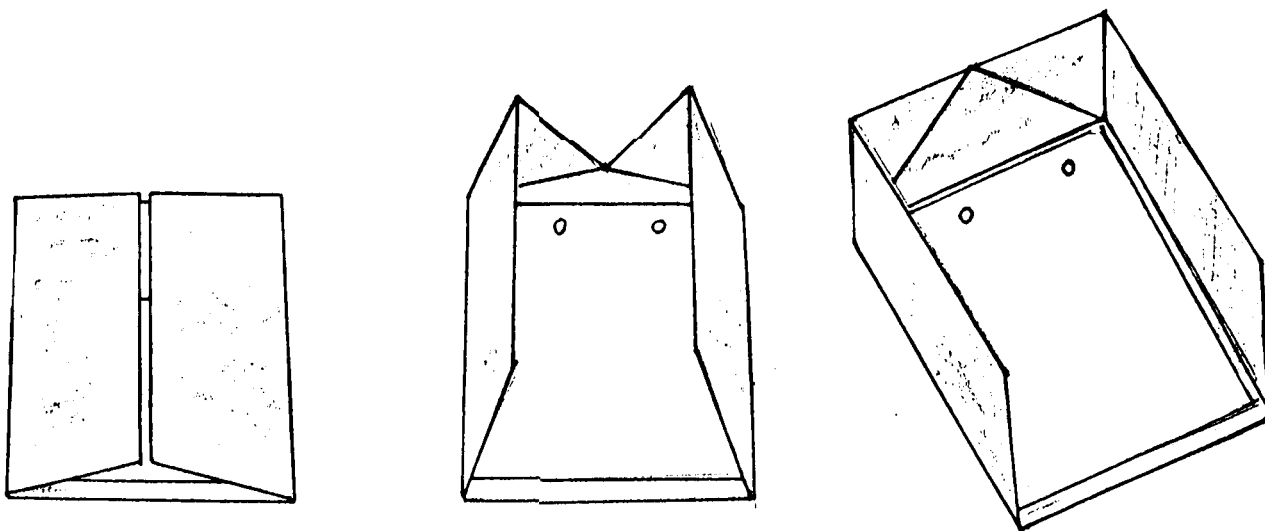
Requirements:

The main gimmick in this method is the secret writing pad the Mentalist uses. It will be easier to show its manufacture with drawings.

Please note in the following illustrations that the pad resembles certain type of gift boxes. Many boxes have a top that folds in exactly the same way as the writing pad. This type of pad was used by Dunninger and is used by a number of Mentalists today. We are going to add some refinements, however, that will take it into the 21st century!

The method of constructing the pad and the materials necessary for the construction will be given the reader on the next page. In addition to those materials you will also need some double-sided *Scotch* tape and some *NCR* paper. To obtain the *NCR* paper go to your printer and request the necessary paper in **WHITE**. Make sure you get a good supply (it isn't that expensive) and make sure you know which is the top and which is the bottom. While at the printers, have him cut you a bunch of paper 2" X 2".

Also obtain some small golf pencils. These usually come in a box of a gross.



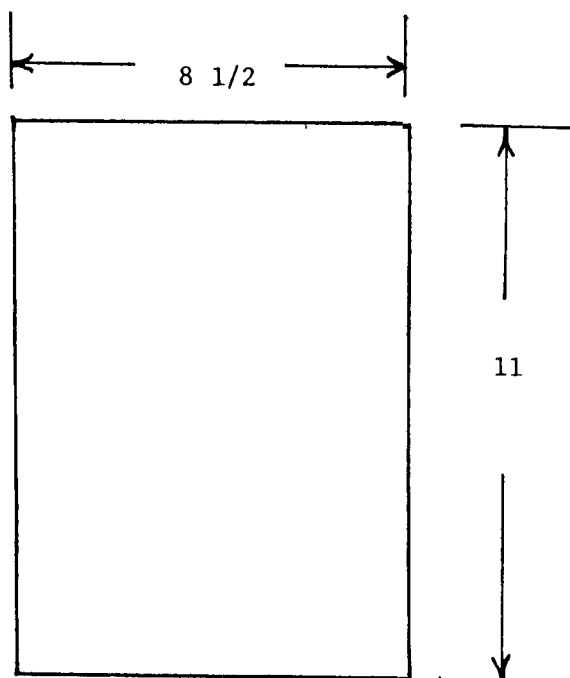
The above illustrations show the pad in its closed position, halfway open and finally fully opened. The measurements of the pad proper are slightly larger than 8 1/2" by 11" so that it will take normal sheets of typing paper.

There are a few ways to construct the pad. The quickest, cheapest and easiest way is for the reader to visit a large stationary store and buy some heavy cardboard and some black (or woodgrain) *Contact* paper.

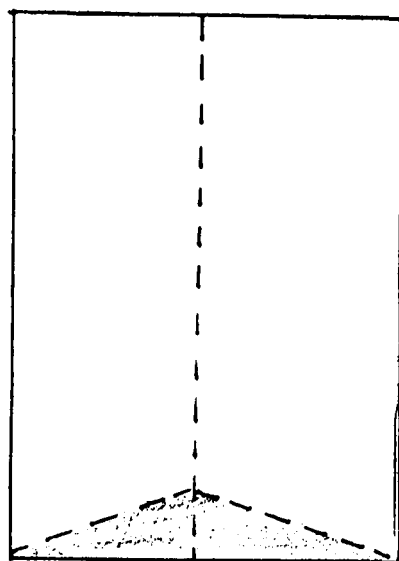
From the cardboard cut out two pieces exactly 8 1/2" by 11" and one piece 8 1/2" by 4 1/4". Take one of the larger pieces and cut it in half lengthwise as shown in the illustration. Trim off the bottoms on a slight angle as shown in the drawing. The exact angle and size is not crucial. It is to allow your fingers to open the pad.

Now cut the smaller piece into three pieces as clearly shown in the drawings. Trim about 1/16th of an inch from those edges as shown in the illustration. This will allow room for the hinges.

If you have any questions about cutting the cardboard refer back to the illustrations of the completed pad.

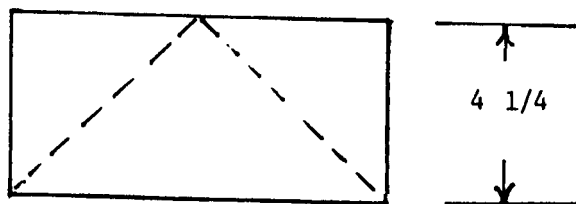


BACK OF PAD



SIDES

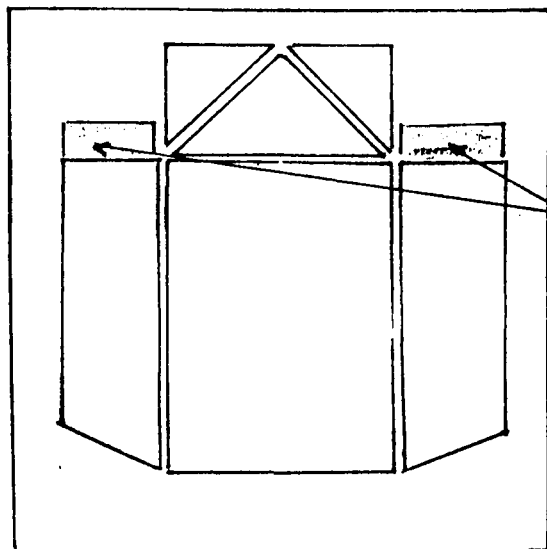
NOTE: disregard shaded area



TOP

TRIM 1/16" OFF OF ALL CUT EDGES (DOTTED LINES)

Next cut out a piece of the *Contact* paper approximately 20" square. Remove the backing from the paper and lay it on a table with the sticky side upwards. Carefully lay out the pieces of cardboard as shown below. Leave about 1/16th of an inch between each piece.



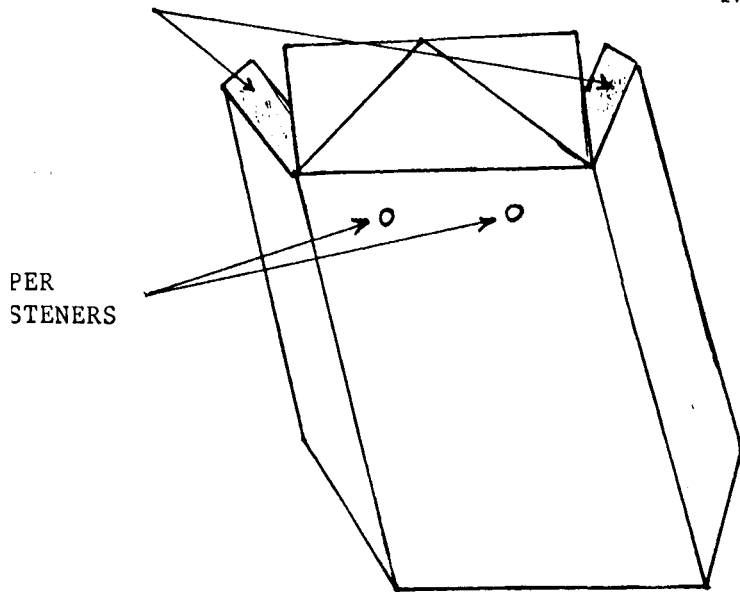
TABS OF CONTACT PAPER TO LATER
SECURE SIDES TO TOP.

Press down on the cardboard to afix the *Contact* paper and then carefully trim the edges all around.

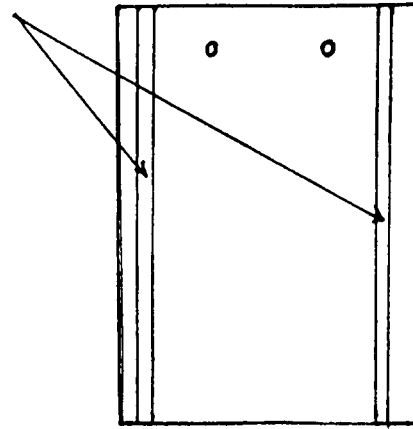
Now take another piece of the *Contact* paper, pull off the backing and lay it on the table sticky side up as before. Lay the partially completed pad on the paper with the unfinished side downwards, of course. Press down on the pad to afix the *Contact*, but this time trim around the edge leaving two tabs as shown in the drawing and also a 1/2 inch border on all the other edges. Fold over the border carefully to make a nice finish on the edges of the pad. Now raise up the sides and top of the pad and fasten the two side tabs to the top as shown. The pad itself is now complete. You may want to reinforce the tabs on the inside of the pad for additional support.

If you want a more permanent job, then you can use a leather-like material and glue instead of the *contact* paper. I made one of those quite easily after I understood the steps involved. What I am using now and what I consider to be the ultimate is to make up the pad in the *Contact* paper method and then take it to a book binder. Have him make you one in book binding materials. This will be rather expensive, but once you have it it will last forever and it will add class to your act.

Study the illustrations on the following page carefully before you begin.



TWO STRIPS OF DOUBLE SIDED TAPE


 8 1/2 X 11 TYPING PAPER
 NCR PAPER ON TOP

Make two holes as shown and get two paper fasteners to hold in the paper. You can use the cheap fasteners that simply have arms that bend over or you can get round fasteners in two parts that screw together. The latter is what I use.

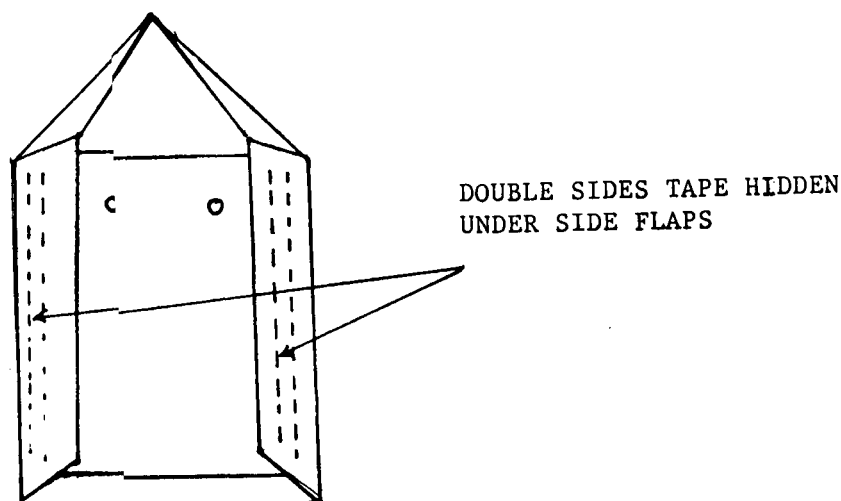
Notice that when the pad is closed the construction holds the two sides away from the back along the edges because of the triangular piece on top. This is amplified when you have paper in the pad. This feature will be taken advantage of in a moment.

Take about 5 sheets of regular typing paper and lay a set of the two sheets of *NCR* paper on top of them. The paper should be arranged so that anything that you write on the top sheet will be copied on the second sheet down. (I always make a little mark in the corner just to make sure everything is as it should be!) Now use a paper punch to make holes in all the sheets so that they can be fastened into the pad.

One last step remains. Run two strips of the double-sided tape on the top sheet of the *NCR* paper as shown. Now mount the paper into the pad.

Once again, notice that because of the construction of the pad, the sides of the pad **will not** come into contact with the double-sided tape. You can open and shut the pad without hindrance and the tape cannot be seen if you do not open the pad all the way. Also notice that if you hold the pad at the center of the top flap and let it hang down, the pad will sort of turn in on

itself and effectively hide the tape. See the following drawing.



To work the routine:

Begin by passing out the papers and pencils to the audience and make sure that they understand that they are to write at least four or five thoughts on their paper. Have the papers folded so that no one can see what they wrote.

Now here is an important principle when handing out the envelopes. Have at least a stack of about 50 envelopes. Hand these out haphazardly at first making no attempt to steal any billets. Many people will be still writing as you circulate. Keep up a steady stream of patter as you walk around and every now and again hold an envelope open for two or three people to put their papers into. When this happens, have surrounding spectators pass their papers forward towards you and as you casually put in a paper you finger palm one or two billets out. Pass the envelope to other spectators and walk to a different area to repeat the above process. During the walk you can ditch the stolen billets in your pants or coat pocket.

An effective way to hide the palmed billets is to grab the remaining stack of envelopes in the hand with the palmed papers and to hand out the envelope on top with the other hand. As you walk away, the right hand

transfers the envelopes back to the left hand and then goes into the pocket. Make sure that the envelope goes on its merry way and ends up far from the person whose billet you stole.

Before doing another steal, hand out some more envelopes and instruct the spectators to pass them around to collect the billets. This keeps up the confusion in the audience and after awhile no one will be able to tell in which envelope their paper is!

Sometimes people will hand you their billet as you walk through the audience. You can either palm it while pretending to put it in the envelope or you can really put it in. Since you only need from 8 to 10 billets for the act you can take your time and make the steals only when you feel it is perfectly safe. Try to get billets from all different areas of the audience.

One last tip: **RUSH** through the audience when you are doing the above distributing of papers and envelopes. Be polite, but make sure the audience understands that you want to get the papers sealed up as soon as possible to avoid the show becoming delayed. It also helps to keep up a running stream of banter about what they should write, etc.

Now take your place on stage and pick up your pad. Have the audience seal the envelopes up and throw them on the floor and step on them! This seems so fair and also makes it less likely for people to later pick them up and check through them. (Just in case someone does keep track of their envelope.)

You might want to do an effect here to "warm up" so that you can make the audience forget about the papers they wrote. During this effect, you can write on the pad to show it ordinary and unprepared. This would be a good time to let it hang open as previously explained.

When you want to go into the mindreading casually remove the stolen billets and drop them into the pad. Holding a pencil in your hand, pretend to write, but in reality you are opening the billets and sticking them unto the tape. You will find in practice that this can be done very quickly and you will have all of them stuck on by the time you are through reading the first mind.

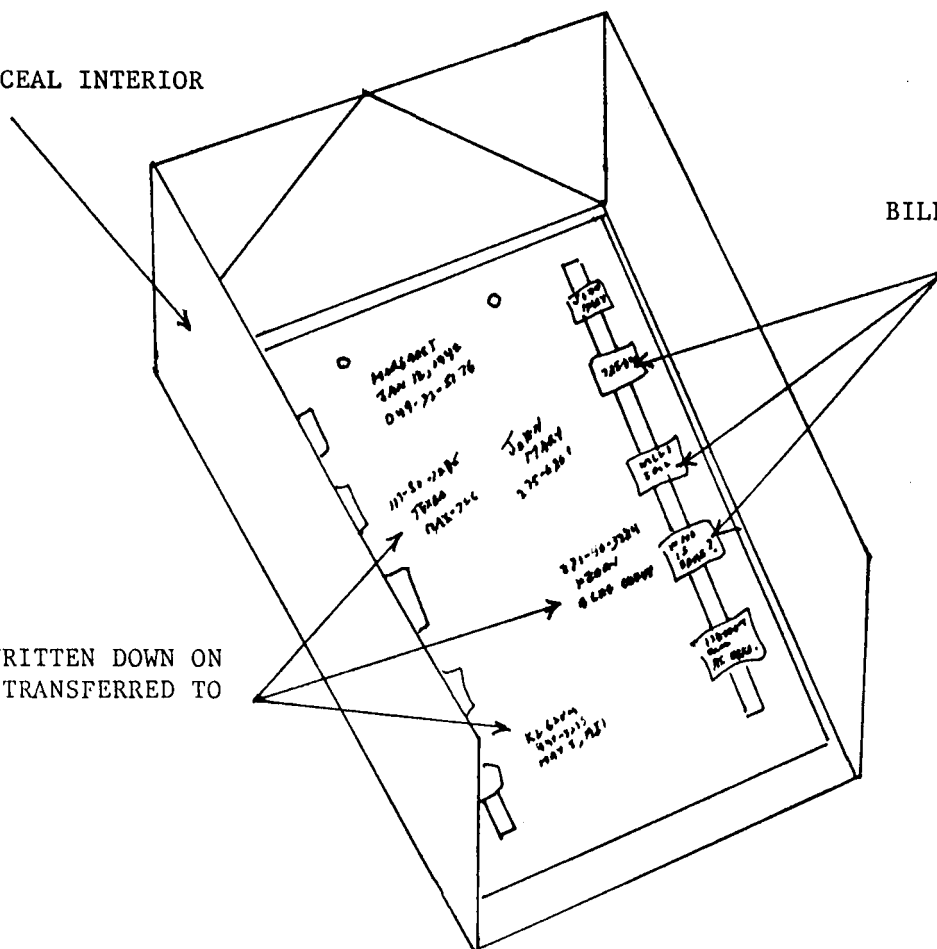
Now you can hold the pad vertically which looks tremendous from the audience point of view since any skeptics have to assume that you couldn't have anything in the pad as it would fall out. I have done the whole act

pad during read

FLAPS CONCEAL INTERIOR

BILLETS STUCK ON TAPE

FORMATION WRITTEN DOWN ON
SHEET IS TRANSFERRED TO
SECOND SHEET.



this way and felt perfectly safe. But the best is yet to come.

While you are reading the second and third spectators' minds you copy down the information from the remaining billets! Remember that because of the *NCR* paper, everything you write on the top sheet is transferred to the second sheet!

After you have read two or three more minds, you rip off the top sheet of the pad (careful not to expose the billets), crumble it up and place it into your pocket as though it is filled with writing and you want a clean sheet.

You are now perfectly clean with at least four or five more spectators to go!!! You can plan ahead so as to save the best information for last. Of course, you can open the pad towards the audience while explaining some thought and casually show that all is as it should be. It is even possible to go down into the audience with the pad held openly at your side. If you elect to do this then I suggest you find a pencil that writes in almost the same shade as the *NCR* printing.

For a finish, rip off the sheet with the writing and toss it aside. Now use a *Magic Marker* to make a prediction on the pad. Close it and give it to a spectator in the audience and tell him not to open it. Do the prediction and have him open the pad, tear out the prediction sheet and show it to the audience. You have now indirectly placed everything out for examination and all can be seen to be fair.

Experienced Mentalists will have no trouble explaining the sides on the pad, but for those newer members to our art, simply say that it prevents the strong lights from reflecting or that later you will use this pad to conceal a prediction - which you do!